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INCOME FROM THE PRIVATE PRACTICE OF DENTISTRY

STATISTICAL RESULTS FROM THE
1982 SURVEY OF DENTAL PRACTICE

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1982 SURVEY OF DENTAL PRACTICE

I. INTRODUCTION

The 1982 Survey of Dental Practice (SDP) is a continuation of the series of surveys that have been conducted every two or three years since the early 1950's by the American Dental Association's Bureau of Economic and Behavioral Research. The purpose of the survey is to provide reliable information on characteristics of the private practice of dentistry in the United States.

A. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The 1982 SDP consisted of two separate but similar survey instruments that were mailed to two different samples of U.S. private practitioners. The short-form SDP was a condensed version of a longer survey and consisted of several questions dealing with characteristics frequently asked of the Bureau. The questions included visits to the dentist, hours and weeks worked in private practice, net income from private practice, occupational status, employment status in the practice, practice personnel mix, expenses, auxiliary employment and wages and, other selected characteristics. The purpose of the short-form SDP was to examine the amount of time necessary to collect such information and assess the feasibility of conducting the short-form survey on an annual basis. Responses to corresponding questions from the short- and long-form survey were combined to improve reliability after statistical tests of homogeneity (Chi-square) and means difference tests were conducted.

The short-form survey was initially mailed in May, 1982 to a stratified random sample of private practitioners representing about 4% of the nation's private practitioners. Coding, hand-editing, computer processing and two mail follow-ups with nonrespondents were completed before the end of 1982. Approximately 55% of the sample dentists responded to the short-form survey.

In June, 1982 a long-form version of the SDP was sent to a sample of approximately 4.5% of the nation's private practitioners. The long-form contained the same questions included on the short-form survey but also questions about time spent by the dentists in providing various dental services, number of new patients and new patient referrals, dental fees charged, utilization of computers, expenditures for dental equipment and supplies, advertising expenses and methods of advertising, changes in dental practice assets and liabilities, and other dentist or dental practice characteristics. All coding, editing, and computer processing were completed by the end of 1982. Two mail follow-ups plus a telephone follow-up were conducted with survey nonrespondents. Approximately 50% of the sampled dentists responded to the long-form version of the SDP.

B. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRIVATE PRACTICE OF DENTISTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

Most of the nation's dentists who work in private practice do so as a primary dental occupation (98%). Only 6% work in both a primary and secondary private practice and 2% practice in a private office only on a secondary occupation basis. Over 50% of the latter group has a primary dental occupation as a faculty member in one of the nation's dental schools, a hospital staff dentist or is attending post-graduate dental education.

Among all private practicing dentists, 87% are general practitioners and 13% are distributed among the dental specialties. Orthodontists comprise about 5% of private practitioners, oral and maxillofacial surgeons 3%, periodontists 2%, pedodontists 2%, endodontists 1% and prosthodontists slightly less than 1%.

The predominant form of employment in private practice continues to be on the basis of ownership in a dental practice. That is, most private dentists

practice as sole proprietors (i.e., the only owner in an unincorporated practice), partners in a full partnership or shareholders in an incorporated dental practice. Among all dentists who worked in private practice as a primary occupation, 95% were owners of the practice. These owners consisted of 62% who were sole proprietors, 6% who were partners and 26% who were shareholders in an incorporated practice. About 6% of the dentists work in private practice as a primary occupation but are employed on a salary, commission or percentage basis in an unincorporated practice; an associate in the practice; or a nonshareholder in an incorporated practice.

The solo dental practice is the most frequent size of the private practice. Almost 75% of the nation's private practicing dentists were working in a practice with no other dentists while 16% were working with one other dentist and 9% were working with more than one other dentist. As indicated before, most private practicing dentists are owners in a practice and work in the private practice as a primary occupation. Among this group of dentists, almost 79% were solo dentists, 14% worked with one other dentist and 7% worked in a practice with two or more other dentists. It should also be noted that about 84% of the private practitioners work in practices that do not employ dentists on a salary, commission, percentage, associateship or nonshareholder basis. While some of these dentists work with other dentists in the same practice all of them are involved in the ownership of the practice.

The majority of the nation's private practitioners practice dentistry on a full-time basis. Approximately 89% of practitioners in private practice as a primary occupation worked, on average, more than 32 hours per week in the office. In terms of annual hours spent in the practice, which includes weeks worked per year, 82% of the practitioners worked more than 1,600 hours. Among the few dentists who worked in private practice on a secondary occupation basis, only 9% worked in the secondary practice more than 32 hours per week and only 3% worked, on average, more than 1,600 hours per week.

Approximately one out of five private practitioners is under the age of 35. Almost half (47.8%) are under the age of 45 and about 11% are 65 years of age or older. About 52% of the practitioners graduated from dental school since 1960 and 20.7% graduated from dental school since 1975.

Dentists in private practice are distributed relatively equal among the four major U.S. census divisions (northeast, south, northcentral and west). About 27% of the practitioners are located in the south region of the U.S. and 22% are located in the west region. The northeast region accounts for 24% and the northcentral region is the location for 26% of the practitioners.

II. INCOME FROM THE PRIVATE PRACTICE OF DENTISTRY

A. GENERAL

Dental fees, costs of operating a dental practice, the amount and mix of dental services rendered, and the conditions in the market for dental services are all intricately related to the determination income from the private practice of dentistry. The level and growth of dental incomes are indicators of the economic health of dental practice and are influential factors for those individuals who are contemplating entry into the dental profession. In 1981 the nation spent about $17.3 billion dollars for dental services representing about 6% of the total amount spent by the nation for all health services[1]. Since these expenditures were spent for the services of dentists they also represent income (gross) earned by private practicing dentists.

This report contains an examination of dentist net income from private practice. Net income of a dental practice is defined as the difference between the gross income of the practice (i.e., gross expenditures made to the practice) and the expenses of operating the practice. That is, gross income represents the total of all fees and other payments derived from rendering services in a private dental practice. Net income is what remains after practice expenses have been deducted from gross income but before the payment of income taxes.

The net income data presented in this report are based on results of the 1982 Survey of Dental Practice. Dentists in the survey were asked to report their net income earned from private practice and any income earned from other sources in dentistry (e.g., teaching, consulting, hospital, and other sources). Independent dentists (i.e., sole proprietors, partners and shareholders) were asked to report their net income before personal taxes while non-independent dentists (i.e., employed, associates, and nonshareholders) reported gross salaries, wages, commission and percentages from private practice. The reader is cautioned, however, that a transition from what a dentist reports as his net income to the gross income of a dental practice cannot be easily made. In the case of a solo dentist (i.e., a dentist who works with no other dentist in the same practice), his reported net income is the same as the net income of the practice. In the case of an independent dentist working in a nonsolo practice, his reported net income is not the same as the net income of the practice. Gross income of this latter dentist would require an arbitrary allocation of the gross income reported for the practice.

The remainder of this report focuses on independent dentists working in private practice on a full-time or part-time basis. In addition, only those dentists who reported their primary occupation in dentistry as private practice are included. About 92% of the dentists in private practice are dentists who own or share in the ownership (i.e., independent) of a private practice and do so as, at least, a primary occupation*.

Three different estimates of net income from the practice of dentistry are contained in this report: (1) net income from the primary practice alone; (2) net income from private practice, and (3) total net income from all dental sources. Net income from the primary practice is what the dentist reported as his/her income after practice expenses but before personal taxes from a primary practice. Net income from private practice is the net income from the primary practice plus income earned from a secondary private practice. Total net income from all dental sources includes net income from primary practice, net income from secondary practice and any other income derived from other dental sources such as teaching in a dental school, dental consulting or working part-time in a hospital.

*Approximately 78% of independent practitioners in primary practice reported net income from primary practice on the 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

B. INCOME OF ALL INDEPENDENT DENTISTS

The net income of independent dentists in 1981 is reported in table 1. For all three types of income, the median was $50,000 per dentist. The mean net income exceeds the median value by $6,230 for primary practice income and $7,510 for total net income. The mean net income from primary practice was $56,230 and represented 97.7% of the average income from all dental sources. Apparently, dentists who are in private practice earn the majority of their annual income from a primary practice. The difference between the average net income from primary practice and net income from all sources was only about $1,200.

Table 1

Net Income of Independent Dentists
by Source of Dental Income, 1981

Source of Net Income	Median	Mean	n†
Primary Practice	$50,000	$56,230	3,121
Private Practice	50,000	56,830	3,064
Total from Dentistry	50,000	57,510	3,064

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

†Throughout this report, "n" refers to the number of survey respondents.

A similar table of net income from private practice for general practitioners (GPs) and specialists is shown in table 2*. The median net income for all GPs was $50,000 which was the same as the median net income of all independent dentists. This similarity was expected since most private practicing dentists are general practitioners (86%). The median income of specialists ranged from $70,000 for primary practice to $73,450 from all dental sources. Again, the mean net incomes of both GPs and specialists exceeded the median values. The mean net income from primary practice for GPs was $53,020 which was about 6% less than the average for all dentists shown in table 1. Specialists in primary practice had a mean net income of $77,460 which exceeded the mean net income of all independent dentists by about 38%. Similar to all independent dentists, GPs net income from primary practice was about 98% of the average income from all dental sources. Specialists net income from primary practice was only slightly less representing 97% of the mean total income from dentistry. Both GPs and specialists derive their net income from a private practice that represents their private dental occupation.

*This report does not contain statistics for individual specialties. Specialty groups were not sampled and thus the number of respondents in some specialty groups was too few for statistical analysis.

Table 2

Net Income of General Practitioners and Specialists by Source of Dental Income, 1981

General Practitioners

Source of Net Income	Median	Mean	n
Primary Practice	$50,000	$53,020	2,711
Private Practice	50,000	53,620	2,673
Total from Dentistry	50,000	54,218	2,673

Specialists

Source of Net Income	Median	Mean	n
Primary Practice	$70,000	$77,460	410
Private Practice	72,000	78,765	391
Total from Dentistry	73,450	80,040	391

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

An age-earnings profile is a means of examining the relationship between earnings and experience. In dentistry the earnings of the least experienced dentists are lower and as experience of practicing dentistry increases, so do earnings. Earnings tend to reach a maximum and then decline as dentists approach older age levels and may begin to consider full- or part-time retirement from private practice. Table 3 contains the mean income of independent dentists by age of the dentist.

Table 3

Mean Net Income of Independent Dentists by Age and Source of Dental Income, 1981

Age (years)	Source of Net Income: Primary Practice Mean	Primary Practice n	Private Practice Mean	Private Practice n	Total From Dentistry Mean	Total From Dentistry n
Less than 30	$32,940	108	$33,860	107	$34,360	107
30 - 34	46,630	437	48,200	426	48,830	426
35 - 39	59,315	513	60,470	507	61,090	507
40 - 44	71,420	369	71,510	359	72,130	359
45 - 49	68,100	345	69,280	338	70,310	338
50 - 54	65,270	372	65,055	360	66,390	360
55 - 59	59,610	334	59,930	330	60,170	330
60 or older	42,060	563	42,150	558	42,650	558

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

For each source of net income, the lowest mean income occurs among dentists with the least experience; i.e., the youngest age group. The next lowest mean income occurs among dentists with the most experience and who are 60 years and older. The average net income from primary practice for the yougest age group was $32,940 and the highest mean net income from primary practice occured in the age group 40 - 44 years of age. The most experienced dentists earned an average of $42,060. Again little difference exists among types of income within any age group and suggests that, regardless of age, dentists derive most of their income from a primary private practice.

Income from dentistry by dentist age for independent general practitioners and specialists is shown in table 4.

Table 4

Mean Net Income of Dentists in Private Practice
Independent General Practitioners and Specialists
by Age and Type of Income, 1981

Age (years)	Net Income Type: Primary Practice		Private Practice		Total Dentistry	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
			General Practitioners			
Less than 30	$33,250	107	$34,165	106	$34,670	106
30 - 34	45,230	413	46,720	403	47,340	403
35 - 39	56,200	434	57,180	431	57,730	431
40 - 44	64,470	294	64,650	290	65,220	290
45 - 49	64,320	281	65,430	276	66,010	276
50 - 54	63,180	322	63,250	313	64,670	313
55 - 59	58,350	285	58,620	282	58,690	282
60 or older	40,025	502	40,010	500	40,460	500
			Specialists[a]			
Less than 35	$70,610	24	$74,070	23	$74,950	23
35 - 39	76,415	79	79,080	76	80,135	76
40 - 44	98,630	75	100,340	69	101,165	69
45 - 49	84,700	64	86,430	62	89,420	62
50 - 54	78,680	50	77,050	47	77,830	47
55 - 59	66,960	49	67,580	48	68,880	48
60 or older	58,810	61	60,590	58	61,610	58

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

[a]For specialists, the age group "less than 30" and "30 - 35" were combined into "less than 35" due to the small number of specialists who were less than 30 years old.

The age-earnings profile of GPs is very similar to that for all independent dentists in table 3. The mean incomes of the various age groups of GPs are, in general, lower than for all independent dentists reflecting the absence of the specialists income. GP mean net income from primary practice reaches a maximum in the 40 - 44 year old age group as it does for all dentists.

The age-earnings profile of specialists tends to differ from the GP and all independents profile in two respects: (1) an insignificant number of specialists are in private practice before the age of 30 years due to the longer educational requirements; and (2) the mean net income of specialists over the maximum income years is less stable than for GPs in a similar age group. For example, for the age group 40 - 54 years of age (i.e., the ages for maximum net income of GPs) the mean net income of GPs differed by only slightly more than $1,000 ($64,470... $64,320...$63,180). The difference in the mean net income of specialists 40 - 54 years of age was $20,000 over three age groups ($98,680...$84,700...$78,680)*.

The amount of time dentists spend in the practice of dentistry has been examined with regard to productivity, the amount of dentistry supplied to patients the level of dental income and the amount of dentist time, and how dentists spend time providing various dental procedures. In 1981 dentists in private practice spent, on average, almost 40 hours (39.1) per week in the practice and 32.3 hours per week in the treatment of patients**. Taking into consideration the number of weeks worked per year, private practitioners averaged 1,867 hours per year in the primary practice and 1,543 hours per year treating patients.

Table 5 contains the percent distribution of private practitioners by: (1) average hours per week in the practice and (2) average hours per year in the practice.

*Age-earnings profiles are useful for answering questions dealing with expected income of individuals over time. Such questions might arise in research about the influence of dental education on lifetime earnings, studies of the affect of the rate of return to dental education and the rate of applicants to dental school, estimates of lifetime earnings for estimating life insurance premiums of dentists and litigation that requires estimating lifetime earnings for purposes of estimating court settlement. The age-earnings profiles presented in this section, however, are cross-sectional profiles and omit an important element that influences these earnings profiles over time....technological change.

**Annual hours per year was determined by multiplying weeks worked per year in the primary practice times hours worked per week. A dentist working 50 weeks per year at the rate of 40 hours per week spends 2,000 hours per year in the practice.

Table 5

Time Spent by Independent Dentists in Private Practice, Percent Distribution by Hours Per Week and Hours Per Year, 1981

Hours Per Week	Percent	n
Less than 20	2.2%	78
20 - 29	7.7	280
30 - 39	40.6	1,470
40 - 49	36.4	1,316
50 or more	13.1	475
Hours Per Year		
Less than 1,000	4.0%	144
1,000 - 1,199	3.1	111
1,200 - 1,399	5.2	186
1,400 - 1,599	12.6	447
1,600 - 1,799	18.7	665
1,800 - 1,999	18.8	667
2,000 - 2,199	15.1	536
2,200 - 2,399	9.2	328
2,400 or more	13.3	473

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Less than 1 out of 10 dentists in private practice during 1981 spent less than 30 hours per week in the practice while almost 50% spent, on average, 40 or more hours per week. About 90% of all private practitioners spent 30 or more hours per week in the primary practice. Taking into consideration the number of weeks worked per year, as well as, hours worked per week, about 1 out of 4 practitioners (25%) worked less than 1,600 hours per year while better than 1 out of 3 (38%) worked 2,000 hours or more per year.

Table 6 contains average income of all independent dentists in private practice by the amount of time in the practice.

Table 6

Mean Net Income of Independent Dentists by Hours Per Week, Hours Per Year and Source of Dental Income, 1981

Hours Per Week	All Dentists	GPs	Specialists
Less than 32 hours:			
Primary Practice	$41,300	$38,950	$55,500
Private Practice	42,700	40,650	55,920
Total from Dentistry	43,790	41,540	58,280
32 hours or more:			
Primary Practice	$58,555	$55,120	$81,590
Private Practice	58,980	55,520	82,780
Total from Dentistry	59,610	56,080	83,880
Hours Per Year			
Less than 1,600 hours:			
Primary Practice	$51,080	$47,650	$70,130
Private Practice	52,260	48,900	71,760
Total from Dentistry	53,110	49,630	73,250
1,600 hours or more:			
Primary Practice	$57,870	$54,610	$80,640
Private Practice	58,285	54,990	81,750
Total from Dentistry	58,945	55,570	82,980

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

As expected, income from private practice was lower among dentists working fewer hours in the practice. This was the case for both hours per week and hours per year. It is still the case, however, that dentists working in a primary private practice earn most of their annual net income from the primary practice. It is important to note the difference between dentists working the fewest hours and those working the largest number of hours. Table 7 contains the average number of hours and the average age of the dentists for the groups reported in table 6.

Table 7

Mean Hours Worked and Mean Age of Independent Dentists in Private Practice, 1981

Hours Per Week	All Dentists	GPs	Specialists
Less than 32 hours			
Mean age	56	57	53
Mean hours/week	25.3	25.0	25.0
32 hours or more:			
Mean age	46	45	47
Mean hours/week	41.6	41.6	42.4
Hours Per Year			
Less than 1,600 hours:			
Mean age	54	54	51
Mean hours/week	28.3	28.3	28.4
1,600 hours or more:			
Mean age	45	45	47
Mean hours/week	42.7	42.5	44.0

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Dentists who worked less than 32 hours per week or who worked less than 1,600 per year were, on average, older than the average age of all dentists. The average age of all independent dentists is 47.6 years (median age = 45 years) compared to 56 years for all dentists working less than 32 hours per week and 54 years for all dentists working less than 1,600 hours per year. Dentists working the fewest hours per week or per year tend to be older rather than younger dentists. This may simply reflect the decision of older dentists to scale down the amount of time in practice in anticipation of total or semi-retirement. Although not shown in these tables, about 17% of the dentists are less than 35 years old and of these dentists, about 1 out of 10 work less than 32 hours per week. Similarly, about 12% of the dentists less than 30 years of age worked less than 1,600 hours per year. About 30% of private practitioners are 55 years of age or older and of this group of dentists 28% worked less than 32 hours per week and 40% worked less than 1,600 hours per year.

These data seem to suggest that the amount of time that dentists spend in the practice partially reflects a natural work-life cycle. Most of the youngest dentists who are working in a primary private practice are doing so on a "full-time" basis in anticipation of building a practice. A significantly larger percent of the oldest dentists are working "part-time". Since no information is provided in these data concerning dental market conditions in the area of practice of these dentists, little can be said about the extent to which dentists working fewer hours are doing so because of a lack of patients or patient visits.

Independent dentists (i.e., dentists who are owners or share in the ownership of a practice) practice in three general types of dental practices: (1) unincorporated sole proprietorships (i.e., one owner of the practice), (2) partners in an unincorporated partnership; (and (3) shareholders in an incorporated practice. As was indicated at the beginning of the report, most dentists (about 95%) are owners of a dental practice. Table 8 contains the distribution of dentists in private practice by type of practice.

Table 8

Employment Status of Independent Dentists in Private Practice, Percent Distribution of Dentists by Current Status and Initial Status in the Primary Practice, 1981

Current Employment Status	Percent	n
Sole proprietor	66.1%	2,434
Partner	5.8	215
Shareholder	28.1	1,036
Initial Employment Status in Current Practice		
Sole proprietor	80.6%	2,954
Partner	5.0	184
Shareholder	5.2	189
Employed (unincorporated)	1.8	66
Nonshareholder (incorporated)	7.2	264
Other	0.2	7

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Most of the independent dentists currently in private practice are practicing in sole proprietorships (66.1%). That is, 2 out of 3 private practitioners are the sole owners of the primary practice where they practice*. Only about 5% of currently practicing dentists are partners in a partnership and an additional 28% are shareholders in incorporated practices.

In addition to the current practice (employment) status of private practitioners, data are provided in table 8 about the initial status of dentists when they first began in their current primary practice. About 4 out of 5 practitioners (80%) started in their current practice as the sole proprietor. The remaining 20% started as partners (5%); shareholders in an incorporated practice (5.2%); employed dentists in an unincorporated practice (1.8%); nonshareholders in an incorporated practice (7.2%); and other types of practice status such as independent contractors (0.2%).

Table 9 contains data on the current status of practitioners according to their initial status in the practice.

*A dentist who is a sole proprietor may or may not work with other dentists in the same practice. A sole proprietor of a practice that works with no other dentists is a solo dentist. A sole proprietor may, however, employ other dentists and is, thus, not a solo dentist. A single owner of a dental practice that is incorporated is included under "incorporated" in table 8. A solo dentist may also be in incorporated dentist.

Table 9

Current Employment Status in Private Practice,
Percent Distribution of Independent Dentists by
Initial Employment Status in the Current Practice, 1981

Initial Employment Status	Current Employment Status			
	Sole Proprietorship	Partnership	Shareholder	Total
Sole proprietor	75.2	2.2	22.6	100.0
Partner	27.2	47.3	25.5	100.0
Shareholder	1.6	0.5	97.9	100.0
Employed	22.7	19.7	57.6	100.0
Nonshareholder	46.2	18.6	35.2	100.0

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

As indicated in table 8, about 80% of the independent dentists currently in private practice began in their current practice as sole proprietors. Of these dentists, 75% continue to practice as sole proprietors while 2% are now practicing as partners and 22.6% are now practicing as shareholders in an incorporated practice (table 9). Note that since reference is made to the "same" practice (i.e., the current primary practice), then the data show the changes that have taken place in both the employment status of dentists and the character of the practice. Based on table 8 about 9% of current independent dentists started in a nonownership position in the practice (i.e., employed and nonshareholder). Table 9 indicates that most of these dentists are now practicing as sole proprietors or shareholders in the same practice.

The current employment status of independent dentists in primary practice by age of the dentist is shown in table 10.

Table 10

Current Employment Status in Private Practice,
Percent Distribution of Independent Dentists
by Age of the Dentists, 1981

Age (years)	Sole Proprietor	Partner	Shareholder	Total
Less than 30	4.0%	5.2%	1.1%	---
30 - 34	14.6	19.1	10.2	---
35 - 39	14.6	21.0	20.0	---
40 - 44	9.3	11.0	19.0	---
45 - 49	8.9	11.0	16.6	---
50 - 54	11.7	7.0	14.2	---
55 - 59	11.5	9.5	10.7	---
60 or older	25.4	16.2	8.2	---
	100.0	100.0	100.0	---
Less than 30	81.2%	9.4%	9.4%	100.0
30 - 34	70.6	8.2	21.2	100.0
35 - 39	58.3	7.4	34.3	100.0
40 - 44	50.2	5.3	44.5	100.0
45 - 49	52.4	5.7	33.0	100.0
50 - 54	63.5	3.4	33.0	100.0
55 - 59	67.8	5.0	27.2	100.0
60 or older	83.7	4.8	11.6	100.0

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Most dentists currently in private practice are sole proprietors (table 8). Among all sole proprietors, about 19% are less than 35 years of age and slightly more than 25% are 60 years of age or older (table 10, top half). The percent of dentists who are sole proprietors tends to decline after the age of 35 to a low of about 9% of dentists in the age group 45 - 49. The percent of sole proprietor dentists then begins to rise reaching the highest percent (25%) among dentists 60 years of age or older. The age distribution of partners and shareholders reflects a pattern opposite that for sole proprietors. The percent of dentists who are partners or shareholders tends to increase to a high of about 20% among dentists age 35 - 39 and then declines throughout the remaining age profile. This pattern, however, is least true for partners where about 16% of dentists age 60 or older are partners.

The bottom portion of table 10 contains the distribution of dentists by type of practice status within each age group. Among all dentists with the least experience as private practitioners (i.e., dentists less than 30 years old) 81% are sole proprietors, although only 3.3% of private practitioners are in this age group. Within any age group of practitioners, sole proprietorship is the most predominant form of dental practice ownership. Similar to that shown in the top portion of table 10, sole proprietorships are most frequent among the dentists with the least experience (youngest) and the most experience (oldest).

Partnerships, on the other hand, show no significant pattern never reaching more than 10% of dentists in any age group. Shareholders in incorporated practices are the least frequent among the youngest and oldest group and reach a high of 44.5% of dentists 40 - 44 years of age.

Table 11 contains mean net income of dentists practicing as sole proprietors, partners and shareholders in an incorporated dental practice.

Table 11

Income of General Practitioners and Specialists by Employment Status in Primary Practice, 1981

Type of Income	Sole Proprietor	Partner	Shareholder
All Independent Dentists			
Primary Practice	$47,840	$58,470	$75,160
Private Practice	48,350	61,850	75,750
Total from Dentistry	49,020	62,600	76,480
Mean Dentist Age	49	45	45
General Practitioners			
Primary Practice	$47,040	$55,830	$69,140
Private Practice	47,480	59,570	69,700
Total from Dentistry	48,060	60,240	70,320
Mean Dentist Age	49	45	45
Specialists			
Primary Practice	$57,000	$71,080	$94,155
Private Practice	58,600	73,900	95,330
Total from Dentistry	60,130	75,060	96,430
Mean Dentist Age	50	47	47

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Again, regardless of employment status of the dentist, most of the dental net income is earned from a primary private dental practice. There is, however, variation in income among dentists in different employment arrangements. Most dentists work in sole proprietorships and, on average, earn net income lower than dentists in other practice arrangements. Among all dentists working as shareholders in an incorporated practice, the mean net income from the primary practice was $75,160 representing about 57% more than the corresponding average net income earned by sole proprietors ($47,840). Among general practitioners this difference amounts to 47% and among specialists the difference in net income between sole proprietors and shareholders was 65%.

The mean net income earned by independent dentists in private practice by geographic region of the U.S.is shown in table 12.

Table 12

Mean Net Income and Mean Age of General Practitioners and Specialists by U.S. Region and Source of Dental Income, 1981

Region	Primary Practice	Private Practice	Total from Dentistry	n	Mean Age
		All Independent Dentists			
New England	$50,740	$51,190	$51,930	209	48.5
Middle Atlantic	52,940	53,870	54,770	528	50.9
East North Central	59,080	59,570	60,050	567	48.2
West North Central	52,800	53,280	54,005	264	47.1
South Atlantic	58,390	58,870	59,730	419	46.8
East South Central	54,370	54,300	54,860	158	44.6
West South Central	58,630	58,720	59,350	265	45.0
Mountain	54,280	54,950	55,200	150	45.4
Pacific	58,440	59,410	60,140	560	47.5
		General Practitioners			
New England	$48,820	$49,290	$49,900	167	48.8
Middle Atlantic	50,600	51,420	52,230	460	51.3
East North Central	54,830	55,270	55,750	508	47.9
West North Central	49,640	50,060	50,720	239	47.4
South Atlantic	53,840	54,510	55,490	346	46.5
East South Central	49,710	50,070	50,460	136	44.9
West South Central	56,850	57,310	57,910	240	44.7
Mountain	48,780	49,550	49,780	125	44.9
Pacific	56,070	56,780	57,180	489	47.0
		Specialists[a]			
New England	$58,350	$59,250	$60,530	42	47.1
Middle Atlantic	68,730	70,730	72,260	68	48.0
East North Central	95 690	96,580	97,060	59	50.0
West North Central	83,030	85,200	86,540	25	44.0
South Atlantic	79,960	80,340	80,600	73	48.0
East South Central	83,180	81,710	83,340	22	42.0
West South Central	75,730	73,920	74,905	25	47.0
Mountain	81,760	81,760	82,080	25	47.9
Pacific	74,760	78,130	81,190	71	50.2

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

[a]The mean net income of specialists by region is less reliable than for GPs due to the smaller sample of specialists per geographic region.

The mean net income from primary practice for all independent dentists was shown to be about $56,230 in table 1. The mean net income was lower than the national average in five of the nine regions including New England ($50,740), Middle Atlantic ($52,940), West North Central ($52,800), East South Central ($54,370) and Mountain ($54,280). The remaining four regions had mean incomes that exceeded the national average. Among general practitioners, the same regions had mean net incomes lower than the national average net income of GPs of $53,020 (table 2). For specialists the national average net income was $77,460 from a primary practice. Five out of the nine regions showed averages exceeding the national average. These averages ranged from $79,960 in the South Atlantic region to $95,690 in the East North Central Region.

In general, the source of dentists net income is not affected by the region where the dentist practices. Most of the dentist income is earned from a primary private practice. This is true for all independent dentists, on average, and among the general practitioners. In general this was also true among specialists who, on average, earned about 97% of net income from a primary practice (table 2). Two regions tend to differ from this national average and include the Middle Atlantic region (95%) and the Pacific region (92%).

C. INCOME OF SOLO DENTISTS

The net income of solo dentists in 1981 is reported in table 13. For all three types of income, the median was $50,000 per dentist. Mean income exceeds the median values by $3,700 for primary practice income to $4,730 for total net income. The mean net income from primary practice was $53,700 and represented 98% of the average income from all dental sources. Apparently, dentists who are in solo practice earn the majority of their annual income from a primary practice.

Table 13

Net Income of Dentists in Private Practice, Solo Dentists by Type of Net Income, 1981

Net Income Type	Median	Mean	n
Primary Practice	$50,000	$53,700	2,438
Private Practice	50,000	54,060	2,399
Total from Dentistry	50,000	54,730	2,399

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

A similar table of net income for private practice solo general practitioners (GPs) and specialists is shown in table 14. The median net income for all solo GPs was about $48,000 which was lower than the median net income of all solo dentists.

Table 14

Mean Net Income of Solo General Practitioners and Specialists by Source of Dental Income, 1981

General Practitioners

Source of Net Income	Median	Mean	n
Primary Practice	$48,000	$50,840	2,142
Private Practice	48,000	51,180	2,115
Total from Dentistry	48,000	51,740	2,115

Specialists

Source of Net Income	Median	Mean	n
Primary Practice	$70,000	$74,440	296
Private Practice	70,000	75,510	284
Total from Dentistry	72,000	72,990	284

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

This was expected since the majority of all solo dentists are general practitioners (88%). The median income of solo specialists ranged from $70,000 from primary practice to $72,000 from all dental sources. Again, the mean net incomes of both solo GPs and specialists exceeded the median values. The mean net income from primary practice for solo GPs was $50,840 which was about 5% less than the average for all dentists shown in table 13. Specialists in solo practice had a mean net income of $74,440 which exceeded the mean net income of all solo dentists by about 39%. Both solo GPs and solo specialists derive their net income from a private practice that represents their primary dental occupation.

Table 15

Mean Net Income of Solo Dentists by Age and by Source of Dental Income, 1981

Age (years)	Source of Net Income: Primary Practice Mean	Primary Practice n	Private Practice Mean	Private Practice n	Total from Dentistry Mean	Total from Dentistry n
Less than 30	$32,370	84	$33,251	83	$33,750	83
30 - 34	45,460	343	46,330	335	46,850	335
35 - 39	56,400	381	57,125	376	57,800	376
40 - 44	68,510	272	68,630	267	69,340	267
45 - 49	66,100	256	66,730	254	67,920	254
50 - 54	62,550	303	62,380	293	63,470	293
55 - 59	56,990	274	57,060	270	57,265	270
60 or older	39,820	470	39,930	463	40,450	463

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

The lowest mean net income occurs among solo dentists with the least experience; i.e., the youngest age group (table 15). The next lowest mean net income occurs among solo dentists with the most experience and who are beginning to face retirement decisions. The average net income from primary practice for the youngest age group was $32,370 and the highest mean net income from primary practice occurred in the age group 40 - 44 years of age. The most experienced solo dentists earned an average of $39,820. Again little difference exists among the average income figures within any age group and suggests that regardless of age solo dentists derive most of their income from a primary private practice.

Income from dentistry by dentist age for solo general practitioners and solo specialists is shown in table 16.

Table 16

Mean Net Income of Solo General Practitioners and Solo Specialists by Age and Source of Dental Income, 1981

Age (years)	Source of Net Income: Primary Practice Mean	n	Private Practice Mean	n	Total from Dentistry Mean	n
General Practitioners						
Less than 30	$32,760	83	$33,630	82	$34,130	82
30 - 34	44,410	325	45,130	318	45,620	318
35 - 39	53,420	325	54,290	323	54,880	323
40 - 44	63,040	225	62,900	222	63,540	222
45 - 49	61,070	209	61,650	207	62,290	207
50 - 54	61,200	264	61,450	257	62,550	257
55 - 59	56,190	235	56,170	232	56,230	232
60 or older	37,800	424	37,770	422	38,250	422
Specialists[a]						
Less than 35	$64,430	18	$68,750	17	$69,930	17
35 - 39	73,680	56	74,370	53	75,580	53
40 - 44	94,670	47	96,920	45	97,950	45
45 - 49	88,470	47	89,090	47	92,720	47
50 - 54	71,690	39	68,980	36	70,000	36
55 - 59	61,830	39	62,480	38	63,600	38
60 or older	59,810	43	62,150	41	63,140	41

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

[a]For specialists, the age group "less than 30" and "30 - 35" were combined into "less than 35" due to the small number of specialists less than 30 years old.

The age-earnings profile of solo GPs is very similar to that of all solo dentists in table 15. The mean income of the various age groups of GPs are, in general, lower than for all solo dentists reflecting the absence of the specialist income. Solo GP mean net income from primary practice reaches a maximum in the 40 - 44 year old age group as it does for all solo dentists.

In 1981, solo dentists in private practice spent, on average, 38.9 hours per week in the practice and 32.0 hours per week in the treatment of patients. Taking into consideration the number of weeks worked per year, solo practitioners average 1,861 hours per year in the primary practice and 1,533 hours per year treating patients*.

Table 17 contains the percent distribution of solo practitioners by: (1) average hours per week in the private practice and (2) average hours per year in the private practice.

Table 17

Time Spent by Solo Dentists in Private Practice, Percent Distribution by Hours Per Week and Hours Per Year, 1981

Hours Per Week	Percent	n
Less than 20	2.4%	67
20 - 29	8.3	232
30 - 39	40.5	1,139
40 - 49	35.9	1,009
50 or more	12.9	364
Hours Per Year		
Less than 1,000	4.3%	119
1,000 - 1,199	3.2	88
1,200 - 1,399	5.5	153
1,400 - 1,599	12.7	351
1,600 - 1,799	18.7	515
1,800 - 1,999	18.3	504
2,000 - 2,199	15.0	413
2,200 - 2,399	9.0	250
2,400 or more	13.3	368

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

About 11% of solo dentists during 1981 spent less than 30 hours per week in the practice while almost 50% spent, on average, 40 or more hours per week. About 90% of all solo practitioners spent 30 or more hours per week in the primary practice. Taking into consideration the number of weeks worked per year, as well as, hours worked per week, about 1 out of 4 solo practitioners (25%) worked less than 1,600 hours per year while better than 1 out of 3 (37%) worked 2,000 hours or more per year.

Table 18 contains average income of solo dentists in private practice by the amount of time worked per week in the practice.

*Annual hours per year was determined by multiplying weeks worked per year in the primary practice times hours worked per week. A dentist working 50 weeks per year at the rate of 40 hours per week spends 2,000 hours per year in the practice.

Table 18

Mean Net Income of Solo Dentists by Hours Per Week, Hours Per Year and Source of Dental Income, 1981

Hours Per Week	All Solo Dentists	Solo GPs	Solo Specialists
Less than 32 hours:			
Primary Practice	$38,880	$36,400	$54,000
Private Practice	39,670	37,610	54,265
Total from Dentistry	40,800	38,470	56,190
32 hours or more:			
Primary Practice	$56,120	$53,048	$78,780
Private Practice	56,330	53,200	79,790
Total from Dentistry	56,930	53,720	81,000
Hours Per Year			
Less than 1,600 hours:			
Primary Practice	$48,150	$45,180	$65,470
Private Practice	48,900	46,160	65,930
Total from Dentistry	49,750	46,830	67,850
1,600 hours or more:			
Primary Practice	$55,440	$52,480	$78,040
Private Practice	55,640	52,570	79,150
Total from Dentistry	56,280	53,120	80,470

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Incomes from private practice were lower among solo dentists working fewer hours in the practice. This was the case for both hours per week and hours per year. It is still the case, however, that solo dentists working in a primary private practice earn most of their annual net income from the primary practice. Table 19 contains the average number of hours and the average age of the solo dentists for the groups reported in table 18.

Table 19

Mean Hours Worked and Mean Age
of Solo Dentists, 1981

Hours Per Week	All Solo Dentists	Solo GPs	Solo Specialists
Less than 32 hours:			
Mean age	57	58	55
Mean hours/week	24.8	24.9	24.3
32 hours or more:			
Mean age	46	46	47
Mean hours/week	41.6	41.5	42.2
Hours Per Year			
Less than 1,600 hours:			
Mean age	54	55	51
Mean hours/week	28.1	28.1	28.1
1,600 hours or more:			
Mean age	46	46	47
Mean hours/week	42.6	42.5	43.8

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Solo dentists who worked less than 32 hours per week or who worked less than 1,600 per year were, on average, older than the average age of all dentists. The average age of solo dentists is 48.1 years compared to 57 years for all dentists working less than 32 hours per week and 54 years for all dentists working less than 1,600 hours per year. Solo dentists working the fewest hours per week or per year may simply reflect the decision of older dentists to scale down the amount of time in practice in anticipation of total or semi-retirement.

These data seem to suggest that the amount of time that dentists spend in the practice partially reflects a natural work-life cycle. Most of the youngest dentists are working in a primary private practice are doing so on a "full-time" basis in anticipation of building a practice. A significantly larger percent of the oldest dentists are working "part-time". Since no information is provided in these data concerning dental market conditions in the area of practice of these dentists, little can be said about the extent to which dentists working fewer hours are doing so because of a lack of patients or patient visits.

Solo dentists engage in two types of dental practices: (1) unincorporated sole proprietor (i.e.; one owner of the practice), and (2) shareholder in an incorporated practice. As was indicated at the beginning of the report, most dentists (about 95%) are owners of a dental practice.

Table 20 contains information about the current practice status of solo dentists in 1981. In addition, data is provided concerning practice status when the dentists first began in their "current" primary practice.

Table 20

Current Employment Status of Solo Dentists, Percent Distribution of Dentists by Current Status and Initial Status in Current Primary Practice, 1981

Current Employment Status	Percent	n
Sole proprietor	75.8%	2,157
Shareholder	24.2	687
Initial Employment Status in Current Practice		
Sole proprietor	88.4%	2,513
Partnership	2.0	56
Shareholder	4.4	126
Employed (unincorporated)	0.6	18
Nonshareholder (incorporated)	4.5	127
Other	0.1	4

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Most of the dentists currently in solo private practice are practicing in sole proprietorships (75.8%). That is, 3 out of 4 solo practitioners are sole proprietors of an unincorporated practice. The additional 25% are solo shareholders in an incorporated practice.

In addition to the current practice (employment) status of solo practitioners, data are provided in table 20 about the initial status of dentists when they first begin in their current solo practice. More than 4 out of 5 practitioners (88%) started in their current practice as a sole proprietor. The remaining 13% started as partners (2.0%), shareholders in an incorporated practice (4.4%), employed dentists in an unincorporated practice (0.6%), nonshareholders in an incorporated practice (4.5%) and other types of practice status such as independent contractors (0.1%).

Table 21 contains data on the current status of practitioners according to their initial status in the practice.

Table 21

Current Employment Status of Solo Dentists, by Initial Employment Status in the Current Practice, 1981

Initial Employment Status in Current Practice	Current Employment Status: Sole Proprietor	Shareholder	Total
Sole Proprietor	79.9%	20.1%	100.0%
Partner	75.0	25.0	100.0
Shareholder	1.6	98.4	100.0
Employed	66.7	33.3	100.0
Nonshareholder	70.1	29.9	100.0

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

As indicated above (table 20) about 75% of the current solo dentists in private practice began in their current practice as sole proprietors. Of these dentists, 80% continue to practice as sole proprietors while 20.6% are now practicing in a solo incorporated practice.

The current employment status of the solo dentists in private practice by age of the dentist is shown in table 22.

Table 22

Current Employment Status Percent of Solo Dentists, by Age of the Dentist, 1981

Age (years)	Current Employment Status: Sole Proprietor	Shareholder	Total
Less than 30	3.9%	1.2%	---
30 - 34	14.9	9.9	---
35 - 39	14.2	19.9	---
40 - 44	9.1	18.9	---
45 - 49	8.7	17.0	---
50 - 54	11.7	14.6	---
55 - 59	11.9	11.0	---
60 or older	25.6	7.5	---
Total	100.0	100.0	
Less than 30	91.1%	8.9%	100.0%
30 - 34	82.4	17.6	100.0
35 - 39	69.0	31.0	100.0
40 - 44	60.3	39.7	100.0
45 - 49	61.4	38.6	100.0
50 - 54	71.4	28.6	100.0
55 - 59	77.1	22.9	100.0
60 or older	91.4	8.6	100.0

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Most dentists currently in solo practice also are sole proprietors (table 20). Among all sole proprietors, about 19% are less than 35 years of age and slightly more than 25% are 60 years of age or older (table 22, top half). The percent of solo dentists who are sole proprietors tends to decline after the age of 35 to a low of less than 9% of dentists in the age group 45 - 49. The percent of sole proprietor dentists that begins to rise reaching the highest percent (25%) among dentists 60 years of age or older. The age distribution of solo shareholders reflects a pattern opposite that for sole proprietors. The percent of dentists who are solo shareholders tends to increase to a high of about 20% among dentists aged 35 - 39 and then declines throughout the remaining age profile.

Table 23 contains mean net income of solo dentists praticing as sole proprietors and shareholders in an incorporated dental practice.

Table 23

Mean Net Income of Solo Dentists by Employment Status in the Primary Practice and by Source of Dental Income, 1981

Source of Net Income	Sole Proprietor	Shareholder
	All Solo Dentists	
Primary Practice	$47,050	$74,180
Private Practice	47,510	74,450
Total from Dentistry	48,200	75,080
Mean dentist age	49	45
	General Practitioners	
Primary Practice	$46,180	$68,110
Private Practice	46,570	68,380
Total from Dentistry	47,170	68,800
Mean dentist age	49	45
	Specialists	
Primary Practice	$56,650	$93,490
Private Practice	58,150	94,400
Total from Dentistry	59,800	95,710
Mean dentist age	50	46

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

Again, regardless of employment status of the solo dentists, most of the dental net income is earned from a primary private dental practice. There is, however, variation in income among dentists in different employment arrangements. Most dentists work in sole proprietorships and, on average, earn net incomes lower than dentists in other practice arrangements. Among all dentists working as solo shareholders in an incorporated practice, the mean net income from the primary practice was $74,180 representing about 58% more than the corresponding net income earned by sole proprietors ($47,050). Among solo general practitioners this difference amounted to about 47% and among solo specialists the difference in net income between sole proprietors and solo shareholders was 65%.

The mean net income earned by solo dentists in private practice by geographic region of the U.S. is shown in table 24.

Table 24

Mean Net Income and Mean Age of Solo Dentists
by Region of the U.S. and by Source of Dental Income, 1981

Region	Primary Practice	Private Practice	Total from Dentistry	Number	Mean Age
		All Solo Dentists			
New England	$46,720	$47,190	$48,000	145	49.7
Middle Atlantic	50,200	51,000	51,880	412	52.0
East North Central	56,360	56,550	56,835	448	48.7
West North Central	48,090	48,670	49,520	193	47.5
South Atlantic	56,290	56,750	56,860	313	46.9
East South Central	49,960	50,520	51,140	132	44.5
West South Central	56,530	56,600	57,210	210	45.1
Mountain	54,585	55,280	55,550	132	44.7
Pacific	56,660	57,105	57,870	452	48.1
		General Practitioners			
New England	$45,663	$46,180	$46,720	120	50.1
Middle Atlantic	48,050	48,950	49,760	371	52.4
East North Central	51,530	51,560	51,830	404	48.7
West North Central	46,160	46,670	47,480	182	47.9
South Atlantic	53,420	53,630	54,280	258	47.7
East South Central	46,060	46,480	46,900	113	44.8
West South Central	55,040	55,445	55,990	191	44.7
Mountain	49,280	50,070	50,330	109	44.0
Pacific	54,600	54,765	55,110	393	47.7
		Specialists			
New England	$51,770	$51,970	$53,970	25	47.9
Middle Atlantic	69,690	70,210	71,710	41	48.0
East North Central	100,720	101,680	102,130	44	48.9
West North Central	a	a	a	--	--
South Atlantic	68,270	69,471	69,646	51	47.6
East South Central	a	a	a	--	--
West South Central	a	a	a	--	--
Mountain	a	a	a	--	--
Pacific	70,375	73,400	77,060	59	51.2

Source: American Dental Association, 1982 Survey of Dental Practice.

[a]Too few solo specialists were included for statistical analysis. Income estimates are not provided for regions with fewer than 25 dentists.

The mean net income from primary practice for solo dentists was shown to be about $53,700 in table 13. The mean net income was lower than the national average in four of the nine regions including New England ($46,720), Middle Atlantic ($50,200), West North Central ($48,090), and East South Central ($49,960). The remaining five regions had mean net incomes that exceeded the national average. Among general practitioners, the same regions had mean net incomes lower than the national average net income of GPs of $50,840 (table 14).

In general, the source of solo dentist net income is not affected by the region where the dentist practices. Most of the dentist income is earned from a primary private practice. This is true for all solo dentists, on average, and

among the solo general practitioners. In general this was also true among specialists who, on average, earned about 97% of net income from a primary practice (table 13). Regions that tended to differ from this national average include the Middle Atlantic, the New England and the Pacific regions.

III. SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESULTS

The level and growth of dental income are indicators of the economic health of practicing dentists and are influential in decisions by individuals contemplating future entry into the dental profession. This report contains an examination of the level of income from the private practice of dentistry in the U.S. The findings are based on the results of the American Dental Association's 1982 Survey of Dental Practice. Selected summary findings contained in this report are presented below.

A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DENTISTS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

- Most of the nation's dentists who work in private practice do so as a primary dental occupation (98%).

- About 87% of the private dentists are general practitioners and 13% are specialists.

- Most private practitioners are owners or share in the ownership of the practice where they work. Only about 6% of private dentists work as employed dentists in a private practice.

- The solo dentist (i.e. the only dentist in the practice) practice is the choice of 75% of the nation's private practitioners. About 16% work with one other dentist in the practice and 9% work with more than one other dentist.

- About 84% of the nation's private dentists do not work in a practice that "employs" other dentists. About 14% of the private practitioners who work with other dentists in the same practice also share in the ownership and management of the practice.

- Most private practicing dentists work, on average, more than 32 hours per week (89%) and more than 1,600 hours per year (82%).

- Approximately 1 out of 5 private practitioners is under the age of 35; 47.5% are under the age of 45; and about 1 out of 10 is 65 years of age or older.

- Slightly more than half (52%) of the nation's private practicing dentists graduated from dental school since 1960.

B. INCOME FROM THE PRIVATE PRACTICE OF DENTISTRY

- The majority of income earned by independent private practitioners comes from working in a primary dental practice.

- The mean net income of independent private practitioners (in 1981 dollars) was $56,230; $53,020 for independent general practitioners; and $77,460 for independent specialists.

- Among the nation's solo practitioners, the mean net income was $53,700; $50,840 for solo GPs and $74,440 for solo specialists.

- Mean net income is the lowest for the least experienced private practitioners (i.e. the youngest) and reaches a maximum among dentists 40 - 44 years of age.

- The age-earnings profile of specialists differs from that of GPs in the following ways: (1) the maximum mean net income is greater ($98,680), (2) most specialists are not practicing before the age of 30, and (3) net income during the maximum income age groups is less stable.

- Independent private practitioners spend, on average about 39 hours per week in the practice and average 32 hours per week treating patients. They also spend an average of 1,867 hours per year in the office and 1,543 hours per year treating patients.

- The average age of an independent dentist is 47.6 years (median age = 45 years). Dentists who work less than 32 hours per week in the office are, on average, older dentists (56 years) as are the dentists working less than 1,600 hours per year (54 years).

- About 17% of independent private practitioners are less than 35 years of age; 1 out of 10 works less than 32 hours per week.

- About 30% of independent private practitioners are 55 years of age or older; almost 1 out of 3 works less than 32 hours per week.

- Independent private dentists working 32 hours per week or more in a primary dental practice earned an average of $58,555; solo dentists working 32 hours per week or more earned $56,120.

- Most of the nation's independent private practitioners work as the sole proprietor (i.e., the single owner) of the private practice (66%). About 5% are partners in an unincorporated partnership and 28% are shareholders in an incorporated dental practice.

- Among all age groups of dentists, sole proprietorship is the most predominant form of dental practice ownership.

- The percent of independent practitioners who are sole proprietors is highest among the youngest and the oldest dentists. The percent of independent dentists who are shareholders in an incorporated practice is the highest among dentists 40 - 49 years of age.

- The mean net income of sole proprietor dentists from a primary practice was $47,840; for partners net income averaged $58,470; and for shareholders the mean net income from a primary private practice was $75,160.

- The mean net income of independent practitioners by geographic region of the U.S. ranged from $50,740 in the New England region to $59,080 in the East North Central Region.